

POLITICS and— CORNELIA

By Elizabeth A. Hyde

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"A man in my position," he said pompously, "is called upon to do many disagreeable things."

Cornelia subdued a laugh behind her fan. How funny he was! Cornelia had a provoking sense of humor and was always seeing jokes where none was intended.

She moved her rocker farther into the shadow and looked down on the man in the full glare of the street lamp. He had his profile turned at just the right angle, as usual. It was a handsome profile, and Cornelia was so used to it that when, on one occasion, he failed to present it directly she asked him, with one of her slow, inscrutable smiles, to do so. He did not see the sarcasm beneath her fun, and his insufferable conceit was undoubtedly flattered.

"Disagreeable things?" she said lightly. "Why, what are they? Tell me about them."

"Well, there's choosing among clerks for promotion, for one thing, and dismissing them when you can't keep them, for another—widows and mothers who come weeping into your office and faint on your sofa and have to be taken home in cabs."

"Oh, dear, how sad! Do you have to say who is to go? It must be very hard."

"It is. There are other things that are just bores, like recommendations, for example. Hardly a day passes but some young fellow asks me for a letter to his chief or a senator or representative. Of course it's easy enough to dictate a few lines of stuff just to satisfy him, but it's a bore to have him come, especially when he comes again because the letter was no good."

"But aren't the letters any good?" asked Cornelia in real surprise. "I thought you had such—oh, such wonderful influence now. I thought any letter of yours would get any one anything."

The man looked up with a grim smile.

"Oh, of course I can get anything I want," he said. "I've fixed several men from my state very comfortably, but these others are just boys, Miss Cornelia, looking out for a soft snap. We men can't be bothered with recommending kids."

"Weren't you ever a kid yourself, Mr. Stokes?" was on Cornelia's lips, but she checked them in time. She was thinking of one kid in particular who like these others was looking for a soft snap. At least, he had told Cornelia it was a soft snap because it meant \$4,500 a year to him and something more precious besides, but there was hard work in it, and he knew it. Cornelia knew all about it. When "the kid" had asked her to marry him it was not because she admired his classic profile (even she could hardly call it that), and instead of blaming herself and fate she had found that life had suddenly become grander, sweeter and better worth the living. She wished she could ask this man to help him, to give him the letter the commissioner required and which she knew the boy was going to request. That hateful red tape! The commissioner had said, "Yes, undoubtedly young Beale is the man for the place, but how are we to give it to him when he seems to have no political backing at all, whereas that fellow Morris, who hasn't the sense he was born with, has the whole senate or near it?"

"The kids don't understand the tricks of the trade, you see," the man went on. "They think a letter's a letter and go off grinning, expecting to be in the cabinet in four years and president in eight. They're too soft to know that nine out of ten letters are shams and not worth the paper they're written on."

Cornelia felt a distinct hatred of this man who could speak so cruelly. How she detested him for saying "kids!" She wished he would go.

"How do you manage with the recipients of the letters?" she asked, to make conversation. "Don't they honor all from the Hon. Gilbert Stokes?"

"No," he replied. "They all know the little finishing touch that makes it important. If we mean what we say and really want a fellow to get a job, we pin a visiting card to the top of the letter. If there's no card, it means no job. Simple, isn't it? When the letters go by hand, the boys think it's a little dodge to prevent forgery or something of that sort, and we never have any trouble."

"Cornelia's throat tightened. "I don't see how you can do that," she said stiffly. "But—but I suppose—with a swift change of tone—"you can't help it, of course. And how do you do it?"

"It's not much of a story," he said, and it was not, but Cornelia listened with breathless interest and was glad that he wandered on from one topic to another, requiring only monosyllabic replies from her. She sat in the grateful shadow above him, her cheeks burning and her usually quiet hands furling and unfurling her fan. When he rose to go, she said good night with unctuous cordiality and watched him as he strode down the street past the merry doorknob parties out of sight. But long after the last noisy group had dispersed she still sat there thinking.

The boy came up stairs two steps at a time and nearly knocked Cornelia over at the top.

"It's come, dear!" he cried, catching her in his arms to steady them both. "You can order your trousseau at once. It's a sure thing now. That fellow Stokes has sent me a fine letter. Isn't he a brick?"

The quick color flew to Cornelia's cheeks.

"Oh," she said, "you got my note? I'm so glad, dear. May I see the letter?"

She took it with trembling fingers and read it through. It was addressed to the commissioner and asked in courteous and well chosen phrases that the writer's esteemed young friend, Geoffrey Beale, be appointed to the position he sought. The letter was spotless and correct in every detail, but there was no sign of a card either on the letter or in the envelope, the latter containing only Geoffrey's letter of transmittal.

"Will you let me show it to mother, dear?" the girl asked, refolding it. "She will like to see it, of course. It is fine, isn't it?" she rattled on. "Just what you needed. It is so kind of Mr. Stokes. I will be back in a minute or two."

She found her mother and read the precious page to her; then, running noiselessly on the soft carpets, she went to her own room. Hastily selecting a visiting card from the tray on her desk, she pinned it to the letter and closed the envelope. Her heart was beating wildly, and her fluttering hands could hardly hold the letter. She stood an instant undecided, then dropped on her knees beside the bed.

"Dear God," she whispered, "don't let it be wicked—please don't let it be wicked, dear God! I don't mean it to be, and it is the only way." She knelt a moment with bowed head, then went quietly down stairs.

"Mother thinks it is lovely, dear," he said. "See! I have closed it for you, with all my love and best wishes for its success. Won't that give it luck?"

They went out together and posted it. In the evening the man came again.

"A queer thing happened yesterday," he said. "You remember our talk last week about writing letters of introduction? Well, I wrote one yesterday for that young fellow Beale—you know him, I believe—and my man failed to put the card in. I want Beale to get the place. He's a really capable man. I found the card on the desk after the man had gone out. It will be all right, of course, but I wonder how often that sort of thing happens."

Cornelia gripped the arms of her chair tightly and stared straight ahead of her into the darkness. The man studied her face.

"That was—that is so kind of you, Mr. Stokes," she said gently. "Geoffrey—I mean Mr. Beale—will be very grateful. We have been so—so anxious for him to succeed."

The man smiled grimly. Then he said "Good night!" and went down the street slowly, as if he was not quite sure of the way.

Her Dog.

A bachelor girl who hurried home each evening from her studio with the picture always before her of the small friend who was to greet her at the door of her apartment in a wriggling ecstasy of welcome had a guest one evening who did not go in so much for dogs as he did for bachelor girls. The girl had relaxed her small friend rather sharply for barking at the man who didn't come for dogs, and the former ad took a refuge under a table.

"I don't see what dogs are worth when they bark," she said.

"Make a gesture as though you were to strike me," replied the girl.

The man did so. In an instant the small friend that a moment before had been leaping and had crawled under the table to brood over his wrongs was standing beside his mistress with hackles up and teeth gleaming, growling ominously at the guest. "Do you know what he is growling at you?" asked the girl. "It's only a paraphrase, but the original once made a nation's blood tingle. When I think of how I have humiliated and shamed him before you and of how he stands here now on guard, I am foolish enough to feel my own blood tingle. His growl, translated, means, 'My mistress—right or wrong?'—New York Telegram.

A Missing Point.

"Professor," said an acquaintance, "you understand Latin, do you not?"

"Well," replied the professor, "I may be said to have a fair knowledge of Latin; yes."

"I know everybody says you have. I wish you would tell me what 'volix' means. Nobody that I have asked seems to have heard the word."

"If there is any such word as 'volix,' madam, of which I have serious doubts, I certainly do not know what it means."

"You surprise me, professor. A man of your attainments ought to know that 'volix' means vol. ix."

The professor devoted a moment to calling up his reserves and bringing his light artillery into action.

"It is no wonder, madam," he said, "that I did not see the point of your joke. You left the point out of it."

Imagination.

"Some folks," says a New York hotel clerk, "are so easily 'hornswoggled.' Oh, that's Greek, I guess, and means that you are fooled. Now, for instance, a man in a restaurant the other day ordered broiled mackerel, and he ate it with great relish, loudly declaring that broiling is the only way to cook mackerel. But was his mackerel broiled? Not much. It is too much trouble to broil a fish, so the cook put it in a pan and fried it and then made burned lines across it with a red-hot poker kept in readiness for such emergencies. So the man was 'hornswoggled,' but, as he didn't know it, he was as happy as though he had really eaten broiled mackerel. I tell you, imagination is three-fourths of life."

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QUEER NATURAL HISTORY.

Some Curious Eighteenth Century
Notions About Animals.

Some curious specimens of folklore and natural history are contained in a rare book called "The Sportsman's Dictionary," which was published 100 years ago. The author was evidently a Philistine among Philistines in his attitude toward nature.

Of the master musician, the black-bird, he says:

"This bird is known by all persons and is better to be eaten than kept, being much sweeter to the palate when dead and well roasted than to the ear while living; sings about three months in the year, or four at most, though his song is worth nothing, but if he be taught to whistle he is of some value, being very loud, though coarse." What an ear and mind!

And here is a story of the squirrel with the ring in it of the seventeenth even more than the eighteenth century. It reminds one of the hares of Isaac Walton, that changed their sexes once a year.

"If what is reported of them be true the admirable cunning of the squirrel appears in her (where we commonly use 'his' when the sex need not be specified our ancestors often used 'her') swimming or passing over a river, for when she is constrained by hunger so to do she seeks out some rind or small bark of a tree, which she sets upon the water and then goes into it, and, holding up her tail like a sail, lets the wind drive her to the other side and carries meat in her mouth to prevent being famished by the length of the voyage."

Of the wild boar we have this: "And what place soever he bites, whether man or dog, the heat of his teeth causes inflammation in the wound. If therefore he does but touch the hair of a dog he burns off, nay, huntsmen have tried the heat of his teeth by laying hairs on them as soon as he was dead, and they have shriveled up as if touched with a hot iron."

OLD HOUSES ON THE HUDSON

They Are Picturesque, but Sadly
Lacking in Comfort.

Dutch customs still prevail to a surprising extent in the old villages up the Hudson, and the modern house-keeper from the city who takes a picturesque dwelling, built about 1690, for a summer home is confronted by some bewildering conditions.

While water and the scrubbing brush were and are much in evidence, the sanitation of the bedrooms does not meet modern requirements. In fact, unless the house has been materially altered there were no bedrooms, distinctly such, but from each of the five rooms on the one floor, kitchen, included, open recesses or alcoves just large enough to contain a double bed, says the Brooklyn Eagle.

These used to be filled with "four-posters," having trundle beds beneath, so that a family of twenty persons was easily accommodated, and, if necessary, more people could be placed in the open garret, generally reserved for storage purposes.

Reverence for the past and its traditions may induce the house mistress to put her bed in such an alcove at first, but one night's experience of its stuffiness usually suffices, especially as it is impossible to make the bed unless it is rolled out daily, for no space was allowed for rolling about it.

However, the necessities must meet the modern requirements for closet room, and remodeled with locks and curtains they fill what would otherwise be a decided need since the only places prepared on which to hang clothes are three hand turned and extremely fat wooden pegs placed between door and window in each room, reminding one of Matthew Vassar's three pegs at the college, "for bonnet, shawl and Sunday dress."

Acquiring a Reputation.

Archbishop Howley, who lived in the eighteenth century, most unjustly got the reputation of swearing like a trooper. The explanation is that the Duke of Cumberland, who fought the battle of Culloden and who was unspeakably profane, once went in quest of the primate to get his assistance about a certain bill which he disliked. He returned to the house of lords, saying, "It's all right, my lords. I've seen the archbishop, and he says he'll see the promoters to—before he'll vote for the—bill." As a matter of fact, all the profanity had been supplied quite in the ordinary run of conversation by the duke.

His Fast Pass.

They were uttering the tender nonsense that succeeds the great question. "And," said the girl bravely, "if poverty comes we will face it together."

"Ah, dearest," he replied, "the mere sight of your face would scare the wolf away."

And ever since he has wondered why she returned the ring.—New York Tribune.

He Could Pose.

"Why do you think he'll be a famous novelist?"

"He poses for photographs so well, with his arms folded and looking as if he was thinking."—Judge.

No Encouragement Needed.

Her Father—What? You say you're engaged to Fred? I thought I told you not to give him any encouragement!

His Daughter—I don't. He doesn't need any.—New Yorker.

One Difference.

Admirer—Yes, and her mind is as fair as her face.

Knocker—But the latter is a good deal more quickly made up.—Baltimore American.

One is rich when one is sure of the morrow.—Chevalier.

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